



Information Sheet “Winter Pond Tips”

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What to do In Your Pond This Winter

Pondering in the North

When the surface of your water garden turns to ice, there are two things to think of concerning safety of your fish. First, it's important to keep a hole open in the ice. This prevents the buildup of gasses that could harm your fish. These gasses develop as the fish waste and any plant debris decomposes. The important factor is water oxygenation. Although your fish are sleeping their way through winter, oxygenated water is still vital to their survival through the winter.

Both of these goals can be achieved a couple of different ways. The required preparations do not consume a lot of time, and certainly don't threaten to take over your weekend. If you prefer to leave the project to someone else, most pond installers can usually be hired to do it for you. But if you're up for getting your hands dirty, here are a few things that you'll want to take into consideration when preparing for winter.

Running Your Waterfall

If you chose to keep your waterfall running through the winter, you'll be rewarded with some extraordinary, natural ice sculptures and winter scenes. Winter also brings some unique considerations that you'll need to keep your eye on.

A pump and waterfall that circulates at least 2000 gallons of water per hour is sufficient to keep a hole open in the ice, as well as oxygenation of the water. Keep an eye on long or slow-moving streams and areas around the waterfall. In these areas, it's easy for ice dams to form, diverting water over the liner. It's important to watch for this, especially on extremely cold days. If you find an ice dam that's diverting water over the edge of the liner, it's best to turn off the pump. If you chisel the ice buildup away, chances are it will form again in the same spot and be the source of continuous frustration.

Surprisingly, even during the winter, the water continues to evaporate and therefore needs to be topped off so that your pump continues to function properly. If you make the extra effort to keep your falls running throughout the winter, you'll see the most beautiful ice formations and patterns around the falls and streambeds.

Shutting It Down – The Considerations Many people choose to shut down their pond for the winter because they don't want to worry about ice dams or pay for the cost to run a larger pump. If you chose to shut down your waterfall for the winter, you'll need to replicate the effects of the waterfall in order to keep the water oxygenated and a hole open in the ice.

A pump that circulates at least 150 gallons per hour can be placed in your pond below, but close to, the water's surface. By allowing it to bubble about one inch above the surface, the agitation will keep a hole in the ice and oxygenate the water until the air temperature drops below 10° F.

If the air temperature stays below 10° F for extended periods, you'll need to add a floating heater in order to maintain the opening in the ice. Most heaters are equipped with a thermostat that, when set at the proper temperature, switches the heater on only when needed. Note, a floating heater alone will not oxygenate the water, and therefore can be deadly to your fish.

Winter, wherever you live, is a time for Mother Nature and her "family" to change the scenery a bit. Whether it's a frozen, white, wintry scene, or just a rest from the heat of the southern sun, adapting to these changes will ensure that your water garden and its fish are healthy all year long.